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retire, v.

Text size: [A](#) [A](#)View as: [Outline](#) | [Full entry](#)Quotations: [Show all](#) | [Hide all](#) Keywords: [On](#) | [Off](#)**Pronunciation:** Brit. [▶](#) /rɪˈtaɪə/, U.S. [▶](#) /rəˈtaɪ(ə)r/.[▶](#) /rɪˈtaɪ(ə)r/**Forms:** ... [\(Show More\)](#)**Frequency (in current use):** ●●●●●●●●**Origin:** A borrowing from French. **Etymon:** French *retirer*.**Etymology:** < Middle French, French *retirer*... [\(Show More\)](#)

1.

a. intransitive. Of an army, troops, etc.: to fall back or give ground, esp. when confronted by a superior force; to retreat. Also with *from*, *to*.

Also *transitive (reflexive)* in earlier use.

[Thesaurus »](#)
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- 1533 J. BELLENDEN tr. Livy *Hist. Rome* (1901) I. II. xxvi. 236 He had commandit his army to retere abak fra þe tentis of Inemyis.
- 1537 Bp. S. GARDINER *Let.* 19 Oct. (1933) 79 The Turke retyred himself without doing any notable acte, wherby he hath lost his reputacion.
- 1560 J. DAUS tr. J. Sleidane *Commentaries* f. cccxxiiiiv By little and little they retire and on the bridge ouer the Rhine they foughte a longe time.
- 1603 R. JOHNSON tr. G. Botero *Hist. Descr. Worlde* 160 In their encounters..they retire as repulsed, for feare so to draw their enemies within danger.
- 1650 R. BAILLIE *Lett. & Jrnls.* (1842) III. 125 He retleared a little which they behind took for a flight.
- 1697 J. DRYDEN tr. Virgil *Georgics* III, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* 106 The vanquish'd Bull..from his proud Foe retires.
- 1717 in *Colonial Rec. Pennsylvania* (1852) III. 20 About as many Indians, from whom they retired.
- 1743 PITT in J. Almon *Anecd.* (1810) I. v. 121 The French not only re-passed the Rhine, but retired quite out of Germany.
- 1796 *Instr. & Regulations Cavalry* 248 If a line with reserves, finds it necessary to retire in face of an enemy; the alternate squadrons and reserves will retire two or three hundred paces, and then front.
- 1840 C. THIRLWALL *Hist. Greece* VII. 121 They soon found themselves threatened with violence, and obliged to retire.
- 1888 *Encycl. Brit.* XXIV. 363/1 The task of a rear guard retiring before a victorious enemy..is one of the most delicate of operations.
- 1920 *Amer. Jrnl. Internat. Law* 14 106 As soon as the Serbian troops began to retire, the Bulgars..launched the attack which eventually led to the complete subjugation of Serbia.
- 1957 W. S. CHURCHILL *Hist. Eng. -speaking Peoples* III. VII. v. 127 Lack of numbers and organisation compelled the British force to retire at the end of the campaign.
- 2000 J. M. ANDERSON *Hist. Portugal* vii. 128 He was defeated at the frontier fortress of Almeida..and his forces retired to Buçaco near Coimbra.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

This entry has been updated (OED Third Edition, March 2010).

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retiring, adj.	1566
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retithe, v.	1570

b. transitive. To pull back (an army, troops, etc.), esp. when confronted by a superior force; to order to retreat.

Thesaurus »
Categories »

- 1548 *Hall's Union: Henry IV* f. xix^v Thus beyng tossed from cuntrye to cuntrye, from hill to vale...withoute vitayle or succour, he was of necessitie compelled to retire his armie.
- 1550 *Reg. Privy Council Scotl.* I. 86 That his Hienes had..thairthrow constrenit thame to retere the maist part of thair army.
- 1597 T. BEARD *Theatre Gods Judgements* l. xxix. 167 Whilst their Embassadors were retiring their garrisons out of Misia..hee set forward his armie.
- 1648 LD. HERBERT *Life Henry VIII* (1649) 393* He appointed him twenty dayes time to retire his Army out of Piedmont.
- 1693 tr. J. Le Clerc *Mem. Count Teckely* iv. 39 The General Veteranie..retired all his Troops to Nissa.
- 1744 J. BANCKS *Hist. Life & Reign William III* ii. 43 As soon as the Infantry of the Confederates were retir'd, the French fell with redoubled fury upon the Spanish Horse.
- 1796 *Instr. & Regulations Cavalry* 186 The Half Squadrons..may be retired at any named distance behind each other.
- 1813 R. WILSON *Private Diary* (1862) II. 456 The enemy had retired their centre and left, so that the engagement on these points commenced necessarily later.
- 1841 C. J. LEVER *Charles O'Malley* liii The French were soon seen to retire their heavy guns.
- 1897 E. WOOD *Achievem. Cavalry* i. 16 No cavalry can be expected to fight if it is retired at speed with an enemy at its heels.
- 1914 *Christian Sci. Monitor* 12 Sept. 1/7 We captured 50 guns and several thousand prisoners, but retired the flank when the advance of strong hostile columns was reported.
- 2004 R. H. HARRELL *2nd N. Carolina Cavalry* ii. 93 By the afternoon Hooker himself was across the ford, and during the stormy night of May 5, Hooker retired his army back across the river.

(Hide quotations)

c. intransitive. Fencing. To give ground before one's opponent; to take one or more steps backward.

Thesaurus »
Categories »

- 1594 I. G. tr. G. di Grassi *True Arte Def.* N 4 b The enimie hath no other remedie to safe himselfe, then to retire backe.
- 1595 V. SAVIOLO *Practise* i. * 4 b To hit and retire is not discommendable.
- 1705 H. BLACKWELL *Eng. Fencing-master* (new ed.) v. 17 No more [than two feints] are convenient, except your Adversary retires on a good Guard, and you approach on him.
- 1707 W. HOPE *New Method Fencing* iv. 122 It will be fit for you to retire a little with a single Step.
- 1765 D. ANGELO *School of Fencing* (ed. 2) 58/1 If you should not have room to retire, you may lean your left hand on your hip, and keep your sword in a continual circle parade.
- 1861 G. CHAPMAN *Foil Pract.* 39 Advance one pace as I retire..; retire in quarte.
- 1889 W. H. POLLOCK et al. *Fencing* (Badminton Libr. of Sports & Pastimes) vi. 106 Fencers of this kind hope to force the adversary to retire.
- 1960 C.-L. DE BEAUMONT *Fencing* iii. 115 The wide target to be protected requires that he should be able to retire with equal rapidity.
- 1999 A. SKIPP *Handbk. Foil Fencing Gloss.* 85 *Retire*, to step back.

(Hide quotations)

2.

†**a. transitive.** To move (a person or thing) away, esp. for safety or storage; to lodge, store. Also with *in, into, to*.

Thesaurus »

Also figurative. Obsolete.

- 1536 KING HENRY VIII *Let.* 1 Nov. in *Camden Misc.* (1992) XXXI. 56 Beinge now advertised that the..rebelles be againe disparked and retired to their houses.
- 1585 T. WASHINGTON tr. N. de Nicolay *Nauigations Turkie* i. xix. 22 b The gouernours lodging,..hauing vnderneath it the cellars to retyre the munition, could not be repayred.
- 1603 R. KNOLLES *Gen. Hist. Turkes* 362 The Valachies before his comming, had retired their wiues and children..into their strong citties.
- 1664 J. EVELYN *Kalendarium Hortense* 75 in *Sylva* Retire your choice Greens, and rarest Plants..into your Conservatory.
- 1690 LADY RUSSELL *Lett.* I. 68 Happy are those whom God retires in his grace.
- 1719 D. DEFOE *Farther Adventures Robinson Crusoe* 24 When they [sc. the guests] had been retir'd, Lodgings provided for them as well as our Ship would allow, and they had slept heartily.

(Hide quotations)

b. intransitive. To move back or away. Also figurative and transitive (reflexive).

Thesaurus »

- 1542 N. UDALL tr. Erasmus *Apophtegmes* ii. f. 290^v How muche better had it been for me, to haue been born a poore mans chyld, if I shal neuer obtien to retire from the cures of warfare.
- 1549 T. COOPER *Laquet's Epitome of Crons.* f. 254^v Euerye bowman shoulde prepare him a sharpe picked stake, and..to pitche the same before him and sodeynly to retyre backe, shooting wholye together with great violence.
- 1594 S. DANIEL *Delia & Rosamond* sig. G4 What stand you now amaz'd, retire you back?
- c1600 A. MONTGOMERIE *Poems* (2000) I. 101 Bright Titan to the Tropiks that reteirs.
- 1604 E. GRIMESTON tr. J. de Acosta *Nat. & Morall Hist. Indies* iii. ix. 145 The farther we go into the sea, and retyre from land, the more we are touched and dazeled with this sicknes.
- 1667 J. DRYDEN *Annus Mirabilis 1666* ccxlv. 62 Th'amazed flames stand gather'd on a heap; And from the precipices brinck refire.
- 1750 M. TOWGOOD *Dissenting Gentleman's Postscript* 38 He came near again,..and seeing the Wine, let fall the Cover again, retired back, and bowed as before.
- 1788 A. HUGHES *Henry & Isabella* IV. 208 She was scarce retired with her mother, before the counsellor..was desired to walk into his chamber.
- 1840 D. WALKER *Defensive Exercises* 106 Greater flexibility is allowed to the right leg in moving forward to gain distance upon an adversary, or..in retiring from his reach.
- 1853 D. ROCK *Church our Fathers* III. ii. 194 Both the acolytes..retired themselves into the choir.
- 1867 H. MACMILLAN *Bible Teachings* vi. 116 As science advances superstition retires.
- 1930 D. L. SAYERS *Strong Poison* xx. 255 Bunter, who having introduced her, retired to a position on the fringe of the assembly and hovered there looking correct.
- 1963 A. MOOREHEAD *Cooper's Creek* xv. 199 In the Cambrian age such a sea extended south from the Gulf of Carpentaria over western Queensland and South Australia, and even when this sea retired a great lake remained in the centre.
- 1999 H. ADAMS *Many Pretty Toys* 53 Then we retired slowly and aimlessly back toward our homes, looking back from time to time at the retreating figures.

(Hide quotations)

†**c. transitive.** To retrieve or remove (a person) *from* a place of danger or hardship; to save. *Obsolete.*

[Thesaurus »](#)

1578 J. ROLLAND *Seuin Seages* 51 Gif þour grace..wald Reteir þour Sone fra the Gallous agane, Than [etc.].


a1586 SIR P. SIDNEY tr. *Psalms David* (1823) XL. i Me..From dungeon he retired, Where I in horrors lay.

1614 in G. G. SMITH *Bk. Islay* (1895) 181 Use all..dexteritie to retire saullie out of thair handis the laird..and the bischop.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

d. transitive. To withdraw or remove (an object, quality, etc.) from notice; to hide. Now *rare*.

[Thesaurus »](#)
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1605 F. BACON *Of Advancem. Learning* II. sig. Ee2^v For that tendeth to demonstrate, and illustrate that which is taught..this other to retire and obscure it. 

1826 *Monthly Rev.* 1 469 This doubtless would be the safest means of ensuring to them a happiness, which should be retired and concealed, as it were, in the details of domestic life.

1893 *Harper's Mag.* Dec. 161 To retire your comely features in the meshes of a veil.

1899 J. A. HOBSON *John Ruskin* 123 Professors Marshall and Sidgwick retire this 'fundamental proposition on capital' into the obscurity of foot-notes.

1921 *Addr. & Proc. 59th Ann. Meeting National Educ. Assoc. U.S.* 495 Retire to obscure corners, or to a separate room if possible, all obsolete and dead material.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

3.


a. intransitive. To retreat to a place for seclusion, security, or privacy. Usually with *from*, *into*, *to*, etc. Also *figurative*.


[Thesaurus »](#)

a1538 T. STARKEY *Dial. Pole & Lupset* (1989) 99 Certayn monasterys..to the wych al such..may retyre, & from the besynes & vanye of the world may wythdray themselfe.

?c1550 tr. P. Vergil *Eng. Hist.* (1846) I. 78 Scotlond..whereunto noe small number of fugitives wear retired.

1610 J. HEALEY tr. St. Augustine *Citie of God* I. ii. 3 A..foe, that would spare any that they found retired into the temples of their gods.

a1616 W. SHAKESPEARE *Coriolanus* (1623) III. i. 11 On safegard he came to me..: he is retyred to Antium 

a1616 W. SHAKESPEARE *Tempest* (1623) IV. i. 161 If you be pleas'd, retire into my Cell, And there repose. 

1671 J. MILTON *Samson Agonistes* 253 Seeking mee, who then Safe to the rock of Etham was retir'd. 

1685 E. STILLINGFLEET *Origines Britannicæ* IV. 185 Those were called Monks at Rome, who had no Office in the Church, but yet retired from the common Emploiments of the World for Sacred Studies and Devotion.

1704 J. NORRIS *Ess. Ideal World* II. xiii. 571 The most natural way for the discovery of truth, is, instead of going abroad for intelligence, to retire into ourselves.

1716 C. JOHNSON *Cobler of Preston* II. 40 I'll retire from this vile World, like a Peace-making Minister; and pass the rest of my Days in Solitude and Sleep.

1788 E. GIBBON *Decline & Fall* IV. xli. 154 The abdicated monarch retired..to a life of peace, of affluence, and perhaps of content.

- 1830 LD. TENNYSON *Ode to Memory* v, in *Poems* 64 Whither in after life retired.. We may hold converse.
- 1855 T. B. MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* III. xiii. 267 He..therefore, when the Rye House plot was discovered, thought it expedient to retire to the Continent.
- 1883 M. OLIPHANT *Hester* III. vii. 135 She would retire from the fray. She would clothe herself in double armour of stoicism, and teach herself to see the humour in this.
- 1959 T. SHEBUNINA tr. A. Tolstoy *Peter the First* II. v. 592 To mark his resentment Nektary retired into an earth-hole where he remained in perpetual silence for two years.
- 1991 P. BAROLSKY *Why Mona Lisa Smiles* 94 When he speaks of Michelangelo retreating to Camaldoli, he reflects upon his own frequent visits to this holy place—to retire from the noise of the world, from the strains of court life.
- 2008 *Evening Herald (Ireland)* (Nexis) 17 Dec. Deciding it was all getting a bit too much for him,..the singer retired to the more secluded and relaxed Library area.

(Hide quotations)

b. transitive (reflexive) in same sense. Now rare.

Thesaurus »
Categories »

- ?1548 in A. I. Cameron *Sc. Corr. Mary of Lorraine* (1927) 239 I..hes mellit sa far thairin [sc. affairs of the realm] that I cwld nocht retire me from daly service bwt..jopart off my honour.
- 1560 J. DAUS tr. J. Sleidane *Commentaries* f. ccclvij^v The spoylers were wont to escape that waye, and to retire them selues out of daunger.
- 1620 R. BRATHWAIT *Ess. Fiue Senses* 76 Yet was that Power but an idle God, louing his rest and quiet, and retiring himselfe from the care of man or his affaires.
- 1635 J. HAWKINS tr. P. Aretino *Paraphr. Seaven Psalmes* Prol. (Psalms vi) 4 Moreouer he retired himselfe into an obscure place vnder ground, as it were a prison of his sinne.
- 1650 J. ROW & J. ROW *Hist. Kirk Scotl.* (1842) 488 Some fled to England, some reteered themselves and keepest quyet.
- 1750 S. JOHNSON *Rambler* No. 6. ¶9 My desire..has been..to retire myself to some of our American plantations.
- ?1793 *Minutes Evid. before Comm. Privileges* 256 To retire himself to live in Ireland.
- 1842 W. HAZLITT tr. M. de Montaigne *Wks.* Pref. p. viii I lately retired myself to my own house..to spend in privacy and repose the little remainder of time I have to live.
- 1884 W. BESANT *Dorothy Forster* I. vii. 195 After making Rome the metropolis of the whole world, by a voluntary exile to retire himself from it, and to end his days in his own secluded villa.
- 1910 J. BOOKWALTER *Rural versus Urban* (1911) v. 66 Does not man, indeed, seek the true light and highest spirit of devotion by wholly retiring himself from the active world, and through solitary worship?

(Hide quotations)

4.

a. intransitive. Chiefly with *to* (also *into*). To return to a place visited habitually or frequently, typically for rest or relaxation.

Thesaurus »

- 1539 R. MORISON tr. Frontinus *Strategemes & Policies Warre* III. sig. Iiiii^v Scipio..began to assaute the other townes. and whan eche man was retired home to the defence of his owne, he toke Delminum, voyde of succours.
- 1554 J. PROCTOR *Hist. Wyates Rebellion* f. 15 The Herauld staid & did his message there... Which..was promise of pardone to as many as would retire to their houses..& become good subiectes.

- 1581 G. PETTIE tr. S. Guazzo *Ciuile Conuersat.* (1586) iii. 171 b It is his part, being retired into his owne house, to looke more pleasantly vppon them.
- 1590 E. SPENSER *Faerie Queene* II. VIII. sig. T3^v Life ere long shall to her home retire.
- 1613 S. PURCHAS *Pilgrimage* II. xx. 223 The Emperour requested his helpe, to cause him to retire to his den.
- 1695 W. CONGREVE *Love for Love* III. i. 52 I'll retire to my own Chamber, and think of what you have said.
- 1710 *Tatler* No. 157. ¶3 I was no sooner retired to my Lodgings, but [etc.].
- 1754 W. DODD *Sisters* I. II. i. 64 Let me advise you to retire home and sleep, and in a little time I'll wait upon you.
- 1774 D. JONES *Jrnl.* (1865) 114 When retired to my bed-chamber, thoughts crowded into my soul.
- 1820 *Edinb. Mag. & Literary Misc.* Dec. 488/2 Mrs Siddons..was allowed three pauses of half an hour each, when she retired into an adjoining room to refresh herself.
- 1837 M. W. SHELLEY *Falkner* I. vii. 138 She found that he had come back, and was retired to his room.
- 1850 W. M. THACKERAY *Pendennis* II. i. 7 Harry..retired to his own apartments, where he stretched himself on his ottoman.
- 1920 H. STUCK *Winter Circuit Arctic Coast* v. 212 When all the others were retired to their quarters we had the spacious, well-lit chamber to ourselves.
- 1957 N. COWARD *Diary* 1 Dec. (2000) 368 I have my suite at the Algonquin to retire to in between the shows on matinée days, and everything is jogging along.
- 2000 *Guardian* 28 Dec. II. 7/5 Most of us retired to the TV room for the afternoon to watch the Green Mile.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)**b. transitive (reflexive) in same sense. Now rare.**[Thesaurus »](#)
[Categories »](#)

- 1539 *Chron. of Calais* (Camden) 170 The king's..pavilion, and certain others for other noble personages, to retire themselves into after they shalbe presented to his highnes.
- 1578 in D. Masson *Reg. Privy Council Scotl.* (1880) 1st Ser. III. 12 To depart thame..furth of..Edinburgh..and..to reteir thame to thair awn dwelling places.
- 1647 N. WARD *Simple Cobler Aggawam* 58 You will please to retire your Selve to your Closet.
- 1659 A. HAY *Diary* (1901) 50 I..then retired myself to my preparatioun and weeklie search, and had a very comfortable allowance in some meditations.
- 1715 *Friendly Epist. One of People called Quakers* 22 She retired herself into her Closet, and spent many Hours lamenting the Divisions of the Land.
- 1815 W. WILBERFORCE *Let.* 17 Dec. (1846) II. 165 I shall retire myself into my own room, and pray earnestly for you.
- 1894 K. P. WORMELEY tr. H. de Balzac *Catherine de Medici* viii. 181 Hearing these words, the provost-marshal signed to the executioner and retired himself to the inner room.
- 1900 *Trans. Kansas State Hist. Soc.* 4 262 When day broke Walker ordered his men to scatter, and retired himself to the house of a friend to sleep.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)**c. To go to bed or rest.****(a) intransitive. With to.**[Thesaurus »](#)

- 1567 G. FENTON tr. M. Bandello *Certaine Tragicall Disc.* f. 115^v The seruantes were retired to reste [Fr. *se fassent retirez*, It. *si ritirassero*], who for the most parte laye out of the house that night.
- 1621 M. WROTH *Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania* 180 When each retired to

their rest, shee went vnto her watch of endlesse thoughts.

- 1667 J. MILTON *Paradise Lost* IV. 611 All things now retir'd to rest Mind us of like repose.
- 1672 J. DRYDEN *Conquest Granada* II. IV. iii. 133 Let him in pity, now, to rest retire.
- 1730 H. FIELDING *Rape upon Rape* II. xi. 28 She had taken Leave of me to retire to Rest.
- 1775 A. BURNABY *Trav. Middle Settlements N.-Amer.* 83 At their usual time the old couple retire to bed.
- 1813 H. SHELLEY in E. Dowden *Life Shelley* (1886) I. 352 On Friday night..we retired to bed between ten and eleven o'clock.
- 1867 *Criminal Chronol. York Castle* 175 The wife of the deceased, thinking him late, retired to rest.
- 1881 H. JAMES *Portrait of Lady* I. vii. 82 She retired to rest with a sense of good fortune.
- 1918 J. M. BARRIE *What Every Woman Knows* I. 20 The Wylies should have retired to rest without lifting that piece of coal off the fire.
- 1973 P. CAMPBELL *35 Years on Job* 130 My wife and I had retired to bed at the comparatively early hour of 5.30 p.m.
- 2000 J. HARRIS *Blackberry Wine* (2001) xxv. 128 Before retiring to his camp bed he inspected his ankle again.

(Hide quotations)

(b) *intransitive*. Without construction.

Thesaurus »

- 1696 C. TROTTER *Agnes de Castro* v. i. sig. G^v 'Tis late, my Son, I'll leave you to retire, This Day's Fatigue, and Grief, requires some Rest.
- 1752 H. FIELDING *Amelia* IV. x. iii. 36 They then sat down to half an Hour's chearful Conversation; after which they retired all in the most perfect good Humour.
- 1775 C. JOHNSTON *Pilgrim* 181 Our fatigue making us want rest more than any other refreshment, we soon retired.
- 1823 T. MOORE *Mem.* (1853) IV. 72 The rest of the day he is at the disposal of everybody, and rarely retires at night till others do.
- 1861 O. W. HOLMES *Elsie Venner* xxv. 280 At an hour when most of the Rockland people had 'retired', or, in vulgar language, 'gone to b—d'.
- 1886 E. DOWDEN *Life Shelley* I. 67 When the college clock struck two, Hogg would rise..and retire for the night.
- 1919 J. REED *Ten Days that shook World* v. 112 Hundreds of thousands of people retired at a prudent hour, got up early, and went to work.
- 1942 E. LANGLEY *Pea-pickers* III. xix. 290 Tired out, they retired early and lay in their beds, fully clothed, even to hats and leggings.
- 2000 *Chicago Sun-Times* (Nexis) 9 June 42 It feels good to retire at night not having to worry about bills.

(Hide quotations)

5.

a. intransitive. To move to another place; to go away, depart, leave. Also with *from*, *to*. Also *figurative* and *transitive (reflexive)*.

Thesaurus »

- ?1543 J. CLERKE tr. D. de San Pedro *Certayn Treatye* sig. P.i There cam so many people into the churche, that the were constrayned..to *retyre* from thens.
- 1566 W. PAINTER *Palace of Pleasure* I. xlv. f. 254 And Emilia, who had followed her mystresse into the chambre,..demaunded of her, wherefore she was retired from a company so honorable.
- 1597 A. MONTGOMERIE *Cherrie & Slae* 589 Quhill danger and dispair *reteirit*, Experience came in.
- c1600 A. MONTGOMERIE *Poems* (2000) I. 61 If I mis to mend it as I nicht I can

reire vhan resone thinks it richt.

- c1614 W. MURE tr. Virgil *Dido & Aeneas* II. in *Wks.* (1898) I. 330 Till last the prise is wonne...And honour prostrate, blushing did reire.
- 1667 J. MILTON *Paradise Lost* XI. 237 Whom not to offend, With reverence I must meet, and thou retire .
- 1706 R. ESTCOURT *Fair Example* II. i Here comes my Lady, retire you, 'tis not proper you shou'd be seen first with me.
- 1725 W. BROOME in A. Pope et al. tr. Homer *Odyssey* II. VI. 258 To them the King. No longer I detain Your friendly care: retire, ye virgin train!
- 1738 J. SWIFT *Compl. Coll. Genteel Conversat.* p. xxix After Dinner, when the Ladies retired to their Tea, and left us over a Bottle of Wine.
- 1795 W. PALEY *View Evidences Christianity* (ed. 3) II. II. ii. 51 The true virtue is that..which retires from them all to the single internal purpose of pleasing God.
- 1837 J. G. LOCKHART *Mem. Life Scott* IV. v. 145 When the ladies retired from the dinner-table I happened to sit next him.
- 1842 LD. TENNYSON *Lady Clara Vere de Vere* in *Poems* (new ed.) I. 155 At me you smiled, but unbeguled I saw the snare, and I retired.
- 1874 T. HARDY *Far from Madding Crowd* I. vii. 80 The bailiff was pointed out to Gabriel, who..retired with him to talk over the necessary preliminaries of hiring.
- a1919 L. F. BAUM *Royal Bk. of Oz* (1921) xiv. 196 If the three honorable Princes will retire themselves, I will speak with my grandsons.
- 1947 C. MACKENZIE *Whisky Galore* xv. 205 The Sergeant-major saluted and retired.
- 1995 V. CHANDRA *Red Earth & Pouring Rain* (1996) 157 At first voids and physicians and surgeons were summoned, but they retired baffled.

(Hide quotations)

b. transitive. To draw or pull back, esp. to a previous position; to retract. Now rare.

Thesaurus »
Categories »

- 1594 W. SHAKESPEARE *Lucrece* sig. C4 The lockes..Ech one by him inforst retires his ward.
- 1597 P. LOWE *Art Chirurg.* (1634) 171 Then retire the needle the way that it went in.
- 1631 R. BOLTON *Instr. Right Comf. Affl. Consciencs* 4 All the creatures then, pull in their hornes, retire their stings, bite in their poyson.
- 1743 ERSKINE tr. A. F. Prévost d'Exiles *Mem. & Adventures Marquis de Bretagne & Duc d'Harcourt* II. 22 Nor had she even the Power to retire her Hand, which he held clasped in his for above half an Hour.
- 1886 M. F. SHELDON tr. G. Flaubert *Salammbô* vii. 178 Straining their arms in the effort to retire from its rings the enormous bar securing the door.
- 1912 *Official Gaz.* (U.S. Patent Office) 13 Aug. 442/1 Means for turning the bell-crank lever for retiring the bolt.

(Hide quotations)

c. intransitive. Chiefly poetic and literary. To disappear, vanish (from sight).

Thesaurus »
Categories »

- 1647 H. MORE *Philos. Poems* 262 You before might turn to earth and mire What into ancient air so quickly doth retire.
- 1697 J. DRYDEN tr. Virgil *Georgics* IV, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* 144 From his Eyes the fleeting Fair Retir'd like subtile Smoke dissolv'd in Air.
- a1717 T. PARNELL *Night Piece on Death* in *Coll. Mod. Poems* (1762) 13 The grounds which on the right aspire, In dimness from the view retire.
- 1737 H. BAKER *Medulla Poetarum Romanorum* II. 497 Whene'er he [sc. the sun] mottles o'er his new-born Light, Or masks in Clouds, or half retires from Sight, Suspect the Show'r.

- 1802 F. O'NEILL *Poet. Ess.* 23 Now his red orb collected in his fires, Shorn of his rays, A fainter light displays, And from our views in glaring pomp retires.
- 1864 LD. TENNYSON *Voyage* 17 How oft we saw the Sun retire, And burn the threshold of the night!
- 1905 G. B. BROWN *William Hogarth* vii. 182 The last-named print..brings us into contact again with Hogarth's personality, which, through the last three chapters, has retired from view behind his works.
- 2001 C. CRAVENS tr. V. Páral *Lovers & Murderers* 80 Among the stumps of rotted trees, the trampled grass retired from sight beneath three thousand naked, sweaty bodies.

(Hide quotations)

d. intransitive. To lie further back or away; to appear to recede. Also: to slope backwards. Also *figurative*. Now *rare*.

Thesaurus »
Categories »

- a1701 H. MAUNDRELL *Journey Aleppo to Jerusalem* (1703) 12 The Mountains at some places approach nearer the Sea; at other, retire farther off.
- 1730 A. GORDON tr. F. S. Maffei *Compl. Hist. Anc. Amphitheatres* 216 The Wall always diminishes on the Inside, and retires and is lessened but little on the exterior Surface.
- 1794 A. RADCLIFFE *Myst. of Udolpho* III. x. 345 The gothic features of this antient mansion successively appeared—first an embattled turret, rising above the trees—then the broken arch of an immense gate-way, retiring beyond them.
- 1837 B. DISRAELI *Venetia* III. 1 An undulating margin that now retired into bays of the most picturesque form.
- 1859 T. J. GULLICK & J. TIMBS *Painting* 228 In the foreground, and in parts not intended to 'retire' the 'impaste' should be bold.
- 1939 W. H. AUDEN in W. H. Auden & C. Isherwood *Journey to War* 260 In front, maturity, as he ascended, Retired like a horizon from the child.

(Hide quotations)

e. intransitive. Of a jury: to leave the courtroom to deliberate on the verdict of a trial.

Categories »

- 1703 *Exact Abridgm. Tryals* 263 The Jury retired, and within half an Hour, brought them all in Not Guilty.
- 1794 *Trial Warren Hastings* I. Pref. xliii The jury retired; read the whole pamphlet through, and brought in a verdict of Not Guilty.
- 1841 *Times* 17 Mar. 6 The jury retired to consider their verdict.
- 1859 C. DICKENS *Tale of Two Cities* II. iii. 50 My Lord..signified his pleasure that they should retire under watch and ward.
- 1920 *Michigan Law Rev.* 19 116 Seven of the jurors had not been sworn to try the case before the jury retired to consider their verdict.
- 1951 L. P. HARTLEY *My Fellow Devils* xxvii. 288 The door through which the jury had retired stayed obstinately shut.
- 1985 R. C. A. WHITE *Admin. of Justice* II. v. 85 Before a majority verdict can be returned, the jury must have retired for at least two hours in an attempt to come to a unanimous decision.
- 2006 *Chicago Tribune* (Midwest ed.) 2 Apr. II. 3/2 The court may retain alternate jurors after the jury retires to deliberate.

(Hide quotations)

†6.

a. transitive. To pull back (the mind, thoughts, etc.) from an idea or subject. *Obsolete*.


Thesaurus »

- 1549 T. CHALONER tr. Erasmus *Praise of Folie* sig. Siii Wherupon Plato defineth Philosophie to bee a meditation or remembrance of death, in as much as it plucketh and retyreth [L. *abducat*] the mind of man from visible and corporall thyng[e]s, to those that are inuisible and ghostly.
- 1594 T. BOWES tr. P. de la Primaudaye *French Acad.* II. 145 When our externall senses are retired and withdrawn from doing their dueties.
- 1607 S. HIERON *Abridgem. of Gospell in Wks.* (1620) I. 156 To labour to pull and retire our affections from earthly things.
- 1619 W. SCLATER *Expos. 1 Thess.* Ep. Ded. sig. A2^v To retire my minde, from the tumultuous hurly-burlies it is tossed withall.
- a1718 W. PENN *Fruits Father's Love* (1726) ii. 26 So soon as you wake, retire your Mind into a pure Silence, from all Thoughts and Ideas of Worldly Things.

(Hide quotations)

b. transitive. To dissuade, deter; to restrain (a person) from a course of action, an opinion, etc. *Obsolete.*

Thesaurus »

- 1567 E. HAKE tr. Thomas à Kempis *Imitation of Christ* III. viii. f. 69^v Those are in the greater daunger, bicause they would not be retyred from the opinion that they had once conceyued in themselues.
- 1601 B. JONSON *Every Man in his Humor* I. i. sig. B How happy would I estimate my selfe, Could I. retyre my sonne, From one vayne course of study he affects. 
- 1607 G. CHAPMAN *Bussy D'Ambois* II. 475 I feare my strangenesse will retire him; if he goe back, I die.
- ?1611 G. CHAPMAN tr. Homer *Iliads* XXII. 68 Thus wept the old king, and tore off his white hair; yet all these Retir'd not Hector.

(Hide quotations)

7.

†**a. intransitive.** To return; to come back. *Obsolete.*

Thesaurus »

- 1567 T. DRANT tr. Horace *Pistles* in tr. Horace *Arte of Poetrie* sig. Dvij^v Expulse nature with a forke Yet she will still retire.
- 1578 J. LILLY *Euphues* f. 5 Though the Fawlcen be reclaimed to y^e fist she retyreth to hir haggardnes.
- 1605 W. CAMDEN *Remaines* I. 127 But to retyte to our purpose.
- 1613 J. DAVIES *Muses-teares* sig. A2 Princely perfection being past the prime..Is turn'd into the Roote,..Ner'e to retire till God in Flesh returne!
- 1692 in *Misc. Sc. Burgh Rec.* (1881) 57 Once to Bilbo, and not yet retereid.
- 1731 T. DALE tr. N. Regnault *Philos. Conversat.* I. 113 The Air being expelled, but victorious in its Return, forces the Needle to retire toward the Loadstone.

(Hide quotations)

†**b. transitive.** To recover, regain; to bring or get back. *Obsolete.*

Thesaurus »

- 1584 KING JAMES VI & I *Poems* (1955) I. 13 Then wrangles thair Men killd, vnkilld, whill Parcas breath retein.
- 1586–7 *Warrender Papers* in R. S. Rait & A. I. Cameron *King James Secret* (1927) 152 Retire the inclosit from his majestie and keipe it.
- 1588 N. YONGE *Musica Transalpina* sig. C.^v Of death so sweete, so happy, & so desired, That to dye so againe, their lyfe retyred.
- a1641 T. HEYWOOD & W. ROWLEY *Fortune by Land & Sea* (1655) I. i. 5 Gentle Sir, help to retire his spirits over-travell'd with age and sorrow.
- ?c1682 J. WARBURTON *Treat. Hist. Guernsey* (1822) 92 In two cases, inheritance given to rent may be retired, or redeemed by the next kindred.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

†**c.** *transitive*. To rally (troops). *Obsolete. rare*⁻¹.

[Thesaurus »](#)
[Categories »](#)

- 1596 J. DALRYMPLE tr. J. Leslie *Hist. Scotl.* (1895) II. 299 Al the rest he had put to flicht, gif be the Erle of Varuik thay had not bene helpet, reiteid, and with a stout courage put in ordour agane.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

d. *transitive*. Originally *Scottish*. Originally: to recover, retrieve (a document detailing an obligation to be discharged, esp. upon fulfilment of the obligation). Now usually: to withdraw (a bond, bill of exchange, stock, etc.) from operation or currency by settling the debt it represents; to pay or settle (a debt), consequently withdrawing the relevant bond or similar from currency.

[Thesaurus »](#)
[Categories »](#)

- 1610 in J. Dalryell & J. Beveridge *Binns Papers* (1938) 20 I pray you, brother, advertise me with the first occasione when thir soumes is payit that I may reiteir my obligatiene.
- 1681 J. DALRYMPLE *Inst. Law Scotl.* i. vii. 80 This presumption is stronger in relation to Bonds, which are most ordinarily taken away, by retiring the same without taking Discharge.
- 1684 in J. Lauder *Decisions Lords of Council* (1759) I. 268 What they know of the trust or manner of retiring that debt.
- 1693 J. DALRYMPLE *Inst. Law Scotl.* (ed. 2) iv. xlv. 713 It was not a Right to be Retired upon payment.
- 1727 in *Trans. Inverness Sci. Soc.* 1 (1895) 225 [She] gave me Three pounds sterlin money to keep for her—for which gave my note, payable on demand... Retired said note from her.
- 1766 W. GORDON *Gen. Counting-house* 12 Bills are..credited as they are retired.
- 1823 W. SCOTT *St. Ronan's Well* II. ii. 43 Two of his notes for L.100 each,..which he thinks nae mair of retiring, than he does of paying the national debt.
- 1849 A. ALISON *Hist. Europe from French Revol.* (new ed.) IV. xxiv. 366 Territorial mandates..were intended to retire the assignats at the rate of thirty for one.
- 1854 *Comm. Bench Rep.* XV. 94 If an acceptor retires a bill at maturity, he takes it entirely from circulation, and the bill is in effect paid.
- 1901 G. W. POWER et al. *Australasian Ann. Digest 1900* 20 B., being indebted to A., gave, as security for the debt, a promissory note..[along with] a covenant to pay and retire the promissory note on its due date.
- 1909 *Public Ledger (Philadelphia)* 24 June 10/3 The purpose to retire stock would be to avoid the embarrassment of claims from the preferred stockholders.
- 1943 *Sun (Baltimore)* 2 July 17/1 The carriers purchase and retire outstanding bonds out of wartime earnings.
- 2005 L. H. KAUFMAN *Leaders Count* iii. 91 Enough was retained that the Santa Fe was able to retire \$100 million in debt, and by 1945 all callable bonds had been paid.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

8.

a. *intransitive*. To leave office, employment, or service permanently, now esp. on reaching pensionable age; to stop working. Also with *from*.

[Thesaurus »](#)

- c1598 [implied in: J. LEY in T. Hearne *Coll. Curious Disc. Eminent Antiquaries* (1720) xix. 83 For that they were old retired soldiers, they were not only

free from service, and taxes, presented wheresoever they came, [etc.]. (at [RETIRED](#) *adj.* 4)].

- 1650 in A. Macdonald & J. Dennistoun *Misc. Maitland Club* (1840) II. 485 As I cam in upon his majesties warrand, so upon his letteris did I ly asyd all intrestis and reiteir.
- 1667 S. PEPYS *Diary* 30 Aug. (1974) VIII. 409 He did not think any man fit to serve a prince that did not know how to retire and live a country life.
- 1669 R. MONTAGU in *Buckleuch MSS* (Hist. MSS Comm.) (1899) I. 424 You and the Duke of Buckingham..would both desire leave to retire.
- 1712 J. ARBUTHNOT *John Bull in his Senses* iv. 18 I have..a small Pittance left, with which I might retire.
- 1763 *London Evening-post* 22 Nov. Jacob Snelgrove, formerly a commander in the West-India trade,..had for some time retired from that employment.
- 1806 *Med. & Physical Jrnl.* 15 360 Let the surgeons of the former retire upon an annuity, and let those in the latter be continued.
- 1876 G. E. VOYLE & G. DE SAINT-CLAIR-STEVENSON *Mil. Dict.* (ed. 3) 340/2 After 30 years' service..an officer can retire on full pay.
- 1908 *Daily Chron.* 16 Apr. 6/3 Five members of the Administration have retired... The average age of the out-goers is 61.
- 1958 *Connecticut Hist. Soc.* Apr. 39 He was then about seventy-two years old and had probably retired from his very strenuous occupation.
- 1969 R. SALERNO & J. S. TOMPKINS *Crime Confederation* 91 The Underboss may, or may not, succeed to the top job when the Boss dies or retires.
- 2004 *High Country News* 26 Apr. 9/2 A way to clear the agencies of dead wood, prodding older employees to retire.

(Hide quotations)

b. intransitive. To leave permanently one's office or employment and move to a certain place, esp. for quiet or seclusion.

- 1782 H. WALPOLE *Catal. Engravers* (new ed.) 214 He [*sc.* George Bickham] retired to Richmond, and..sold part of his plates and stock in trade by auction.
- 1857 J. DORAN *Monarchs Retired from Business* II. 167 He [*sc.* Cormac] contentedly resigned his power to his son. Cormac retired to a small thatched cabin at Kells.
- 1872 *Lancet* 7 Dec. 833/2 He sent in his resignation, and retired to the South of France, where he continued to reside until the time of his death.
- 1940 G. MORPHETT *Simple Story Rural Devel.* 4 In 1910 we sold the farm on a walk-in walk-out basis and retired to Adelaide.
- 1968 F. EXLEY *Fan's Notes* ix. 384 The generation which will all retire to the great American Southwest, where under dry, brilliant, and perpetual suns they will all live to be a hundred and fifty.
- 1994 *Voice* 18 Oct. (24 Hrs. Suppl.) 15/3 Maria is a London cab driver who wants to retire to Antigua.
- 2004 W. ST. JOHN *Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer* 112 He and his wife retired to South Florida, only to have their house vacuumed off the earth by Hurricane Andrew.

(Hide quotations)

c. transitive. To compel (a person) to leave active military service. Later also: to remove (a person) from office or employment, esp. before the usual retirement age.

[Thesaurus »](#)
[Categories »](#)

- 1852 *Democratic Rev.* Aug. 161/2 Forty of the sixty-eight captains should be retired for incapacity.
- 1870 *Daily News* 27 June That a flag officer..should be compulsorily retired on

attaining a certain age.

- 1894 *Times* 29 May 11/3 Admiral..Hamilton..was retired from the active list under the age clause.
- 1914 *Ann. Rep. War Dept.* I. 153 Two officers examined were found physically disqualified and are to be retired when entitled to promotion.
- 1945 *Ann. Reg.* July 113/1 If even 200 [captains] were retired, the average age of those advanced to the top of the list would be 60.
- 1961 M. SPARK *Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* iii. 71 She had been retired before time.
- 1995 *Economist* 11 Feb. 131 An increase in the number of people who have retired—or been retired—at the age of 55 or earlier.

(Hide quotations)

9.

a. intransitive. Cricket. Of a batsman: (originally) to leave the field after being dismissed; to go out; (now usually) to leave the field without being dismissed, as for injury or illness, with the option of returning later in the innings (cf. *to retire hurt* at Phrases).

Thesaurus »
Categories »

- 1801 J. STRUTT *Glig-gamena Angel-ðeod* II. iii. 84 If he proves successful the batsman retires from the play, and another of his party succeeds.
- 1840 *Peter Parley's Ann.* 132 If the ball strikes the wicket and knocks off the bail, the striker is out and retires from the play.
- 1851 W. CLARKE in W. Bolland *Cricket Notes* 128 You must..make the man play out... Perhaps before that is the case, you will have caused him to retire [by driving him on to his wicket].
- 1863 *Frederick Lillywhite's Cricket Scores & Biogr. Cricketers* III. 62 Wansell..was given out unfairly, and refused to retire.
- 1901 H. BLEACKLEY *Tales of Stumps* iv. 105 Amidst..loud applause, he retired with thirty-eight runs to his credit.
- 1966 *Daily Gleaner* (Kingston, Jamaica) 10 Mar. 20/4 The batsman had to retire, but was back at the fall of the eighth wicket.
- 2001 *Coventry Evening Tel.* (Nexis) 30 July 32 Mark Butcher was struck on the head... The England batsman retired after making three from 10 deliveries.

(Hide quotations)

b. intransitive. Sport. To withdraw from a race or match, esp. because of injury; to pull out.

Thesaurus »
Categories »

- 1846 *Glasgow Herald* 25 Aug. The Rose having won the cup on the preceding day, after rounding the first flag-boat, retired from the contest.
- 1879 *Bell's Life in London* 9 Aug. 3/4 Hawkes had fallen and cut himself badly, and, after two attempts to renew the race, had to retire.
- 1907 *Automotor Jnl.* 6 July 946 Nordenfeldt retired at Perth owing to a fracture of the forward universal joint.
- 1977 *Times* 15 July (Motor Racing Suppl.) p. vi/1 James Hunt..was put out of the race by a crash... His German team-mate..had retired three laps earlier.
- 2007 *Daily Tel.* (Nexis) 22 May 14 He also experienced spasms in his back when playing doubles..last month, prompting him to retire after one set.

(Hide quotations)

c. transitive. U.S. Baseball. To cause (a batter or team) to be out; to put out.

Thesaurus »
Categories »

- 1870 *N.-Y. Times* 5 July 5/6 Zettlein and Pike were both retired by Tracey, who caught them on the fly.
- 1889 N. F. PFEFFER *Scientific Ball* 33 Runners move up every time the ball is

pitched;..the clever baseman will be guided by the action of the man he wants to retire.

- 1917 C. MATHEWSON *Second Base Sloan* 180 The first batsman was retired on an easy toss from Chase to Jim.
- 1949 *News-Herald* (Marshfield, Wisconsin) 19 July 9/4 Nowitzke gobbled up Bauer's grounder and threw him out to retire the side.
- 1972 *N.Y. Times* 4 June v. 1/7 Lyle retired the first 11 batters and wound up allowing just three singles.
- 2007 *Wall St. Jrn.* 7 Sept. w9C/1 We'll use off-base percentage (OFB). OFB shows how often a pitcher retires the batter he faces.

(Hide quotations)

10.

a. intransitive. To withdraw permanently from one's usual activity or sphere of activity.

Thesaurus »

- 1807 *Monthly Mirror* Mar. 218 Mrs. Didier, so long and so justly a favourite at the Bath theatre, has retired from the *mimic* scene.
- 1829 *Times* 1 Oct. 3/2 The report of Lord Mountcharles's being about to retire from the turf is void of truth.
- 1857 C. DICKENS *Let.* 13 July (1995) VIII. 377 He retired from the stage early in life.
- 1910 *Times* 28 June 11/6 He then acceded to the wishes of his countrymen and revoked his determination to retire from public life.
- 1948 *Warren (Pa.) Times-Mirror* 17 Aug. 8/6 George Herman (Babe) Ruth..retired from playing in big league baseball in 1935.
- 1983 M. COHEN *Cafe le Dog in Life on Planet* 172 Mauriac retired from the writing of novels and turned his teacherly attentions to composing the memoirs of his sanctimonious life.
- 2009 *Observer* (Nexis) 15 Feb. 12 His [sc. Cary Grant's] reputation has grown since he retired from the screen in 1966 at the height of his stardom.

(Hide quotations)

b. transitive. To withdraw (a person or animal) from an activity or sphere of activity. Also in extended use: to withdraw (a vehicle, an item, etc.) from use.

Thesaurus »

- 1881 'M. TWAIN' *Prince & Pauper* xix. 244 He was so awkward at this service that she retired him from it.
- 1883 *Lisbon* (Dakota Territory) *Star* 12 Oct. Eighteen packet boats have been retired by several of the packet lines... owing to the low stage of water.
- 1888 *Amer. Humorist* 2 June 5/2 The Sale, after this race, became known, and Mr. Bonner retired him [sc. a horse] from the track.
- 1918 H. C. ADAMS *Amer. Railway Accounting* v. 94 A reserve against which the cost of replacing important pieces of property may be charged when, for any reason, such property is retired.
- 1969 *Proc. Geol. Soc.* Aug. 154 It has been agreed (by the Stratigraphy Committee) to retire the word 'Rhaetic'.
- 1974 *Sci. Amer.* Dec. 139/1 This material served for about a year before I retired it.
- 2003 *RCM & E* (Radio Control Models & Electronics) Dec. 76/4 There were thousands upon thousands of aeroplanes which had been retired from service and were awaiting the blow torch to cut them up.

(Hide quotations)

PHRASES

Cricket. *to retire hurt:* (of a batsman) to leave the field due to injury, with the option of returning later in the innings. Cf. sense 9a. Also *figurative*.

[Thesaurus »](#)
[Categories »](#)

- 1844 *Jackson's Oxf. Jrnal* 18 May 3/4 S. H. Colston, Esq. retired hurt.1.
- 1892 *John Wisden's Cricketers' Almanack* (ed. 29) 209 Mr. E. C. Streatfield (Pembroke), not out 6—retired hurt 19.
- 1925 A. CHRISTIE *Secret of Chimneys* xv. 141 Poor little Michael didn't get it [*sc.* a disappointing answer] as straight from the shoulder as he might have done. But he retired hurt all the same.
- 1977 *Arab Times* 3 Dec. 9/6 Kurian had to retire hurt after scoring 11 runs.
- 2009 *Coventry Tel.* (Nexis) 9 Mar. He was forced to retire hurt with a hamstring strain, sustained as he was running the single to reach his 10th Test hundred.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

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